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SONGS OF CHILDHOOD

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*Under the Dock Leaves,*  
*by Richard Doyle.*

# SONGS OF CHILDHOOD

BY

WALTER DE LA MARE

(WALTER RAMAL)

•  
*WITH FRONTISPIECE*

NEW EDITION

LONGMANS, GREEN, AND CO.

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*TO JILL*



## NOTE

SONGS OF CHILDHOOD was first published in 1902. In this new edition one or two poems have been omitted ; there are a few new ones ; and what is common to both volumes has been here and there revised.





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# SONGS OF CHILDHOOD

## SLEEPYHEAD

As I lay awake in the white moon light,  
I heard a faint singing in the wood,  
    ‘ Out of bed,  
    Sleepyhead,  
    Put your foot, and come away ;  
    Clear peeps the moonbeam,  
    Abloom is the may ;  
    Leave your sleep and with the fairies  
    Come, child, and play ! ’

I looked out of window, in the white moon light,  
The leaves were like snow in the wood—  
    ‘ Listen, O listen,  
    Music is falling ;  
    Tiny lanterns clash and glisten ;  
    Voices are calling ;

Far, far the blue air shakes ;  
Hov'ring and winging,  
Float we in light and shadow,  
Singing—singing.'

Softly I stooped in the dim moon light  
To put on my stocking and my shoe,  
But the sweet shrill singing echoed faintly away,  
And the grey of the morning peeped through,  
And the voices that called me were blackbird  
and robin,  
Astir in the twilight and dew.

## A-TISHOO

‘ SNEEZE, Pretty, sneeze, Dainty,  
Else the Elves will have you sure,  
Sneeze, Light-of-Seven-Bright-Candles,  
See they’re tippeting at the door ;  
Their wee feet in measure falling,  
All their little voices calling,  
Calling, calling, calling, calling—  
Sneeze, or never come no more ! ’  
‘ A-tishoo ! ’

## BLUEBELLS

WHERE the bluebells and the wind are,  
Fairies in a ring I spied,  
And I heard a little linnet  
Singing near beside.

Where the primrose and the dew are—  
Soon were sped the fairies all :  
Only now the green turf freshens,  
And the linnets call.



## LOVELOCKS

I WATCHED the Lady Caroline  
Bind up her dark and beauteous hair ;  
Her face was rosy in the glass,  
And 'twixt the coils her hands would pass,  
    White in the candleshine.

Her bottles on the table lay,  
Stoppered, yet sweet of violet ;  
Her image in the mirror stooped  
To view those locks as lightly looped  
    As cherry-boughs in May.

The snowy night lay dim without,  
I heard the Waits their sweet song sing ;  
The window smouldered keen with frost ;  
Yet still she twisted, sleeked and tossed  
    Her beauteous hair about.

## O DEAR ME !

HERE are crocuses, white, gold, grey !

‘ O dear me ! ’ says Marjorie May ;

Flat as a platter the blackberry blows :

‘ O dear me ! ’ says Madeleine Rose ;

The leaves are fallen, the swallows flown :

‘ O dear me ! ’ says Humphrey John ;

Snow lies thick where all night it fell :

‘ O dear me ! ’ says Emmanuel.

## TARTARY

If I were Lord of Tartary,  
Myself and me alone,  
My bed should be of ivory,  
Of beaten gold my throne ;  
And in my court would peacocks flaunt,  
And in my forests tigers haunt,  
And in my pools great fishes slant  
Their fins athwart the sun.

If I were Lord of Tartary,  
Trumpeters every day  
To every meal would summon me,  
And in my courtyard bray ;  
And in the evening lamps should shine,  
Yellow as honey, red as wine,  
While harp, and flute, and mandoline,  
Made music sweet and gay.

If I were Lord of Tartary,  
I'd wear a robe of beads,  
White, and gold, and green they'd be—  
And clustered thick as seeds ;  
And ere should wane the morning-star,  
I'd don my robe and scimitar,  
And zebras seven should draw my car  
Through Tartary's dark glades.

Lord of the fruits of Tartary,  
Her rivers silver-pale !  
Lord of the hills of Tartary,  
Glen, thicket, wood, and dale !  
Her flashing stars, her scented breeze,  
Her trembling lakes, like foamless seas,  
Her bird-delighting citron-trees  
In every purple vale !

## THE BUCKLE

I HAD a silver buckle,  
I sewed it on my shoe,  
And 'neath a sprig of mistletoe  
I danced the evening through !

I had a bunch of cowslips,  
I hid them in a grot,  
In case the elves should come by night  
And me remember not.

I had a yellow riband,  
I tied it in my hair,  
That, walking in the garden,  
The birds might see it there.

I had a secret laughter,  
I laughed it near the wall :  
Only the ivy and the wind  
May tell of it at all.

## THE HARE

IN the black furrow of a field  
I saw an old witch-hare this night ;  
And she cocked a lissome ear,  
And she eyed the moon so bright,  
And she nibbled o' the green ;  
And I whispered ' Whsst ! witch-hare,'  
Away like a ghostie o'er the field  
She fled, and left the moonlight there.

## BUNCHES OF GRAPES

‘ BUNCHES of grapes,’ says Timothy ;  
‘ Pomegranates pink,’ says Elaine ;  
‘ A junket of cream and a cranberry tart  
For me,’ says Jane.

‘ Love-in-a-mist,’ says Timothy ;  
‘ Primroses pale,’ says Elaine ;  
‘ A nosegay of pinks and mignonette  
For me,’ says Jane.

‘ Chariots of gold,’ says Timothy ;  
‘ Silvery wings,’ says Elaine ;  
‘ A bumpity ride in a wagon of hay  
For me,’ says Jane.

## JOHN MOULDY

I SPIED John Mouldy in his cellar,  
Deep down twenty steps of stone ;  
In the dusk he sat a-smiling,  
Smiling there alone.

He read no book, he snuffed no candle ;  
The rats ran in, the rats ran out ;  
And far and near, the drip of water  
Went whispering about.

The dusk was still, with dew a-falling,  
I saw the Dog-star bleak and grim,  
I saw a slim brown rat of Norway  
Creep over him.

I spied John Mouldy in his cellar,  
Deep down twenty steps of stone ;  
In the dusk he sat a-smiling,  
Smiling there alone.



## THE FLY

How large unto the tiny fly  
Must little things appear !—  
A rosebud like a feather bed,  
Its prickle like a spear ;

A dewdrop like a looking-glass,  
A hair like golden wire ;  
The smallest grain of mustard-seed  
As fierce as coals of fire ;

A loaf of bread, a lofty hill ;  
A wasp, a cruel leopard ;  
And specks of salt as bright to see  
As lambkins to a shepherd.

## SONG

O FOR a moon to light me home !

O for a lanthorn green !

For those sweet stars the Pleiades,

That glitter in the darkling trees ;

O for a lovelorn taper ! O

For a lanthorn green !

O for a frock of tartan !

O for clear, wild, grey eyes !

For fingers light as violets,

'Neath branches that the blackbird frets ;

O for a thistly meadow ! O

For clear, wild grey eyes !

O for a heart like almond boughs !

O for sweet thoughts like rain !

O for first-love like fields of grey,

Shut April-buds at break of day !

O for a sleep like music !

Dreams still as rain !

## I SAW THREE WITCHES

I SAW three witches  
That bowed down like barley,  
And straddled their brooms 'neath a louring  
    sky,  
And, mounting a storm-cloud,  
Aloft on its margin,  
Stood black in the silver as up they did fly.

I saw three witches  
That mocked the poor sparrows  
They carried in cages of wicker along,  
Till a hawk from his eyrie  
Swooped down like an arrow,  
Smote on the cages, and ended their song.

I saw three witches  
That sailed in a shallop,  
All turning their heads with a smickering smile,

Till a bank of green osiers  
Concealed their grim faces,  
Though I heard them lamenting for many a  
mile.

I saw three witches  
Asleep in a valley,  
Their heads in a row, like stones in a flood,  
Till the moon, creeping upward,  
Looked white through the valley,  
And turned them to bushes in bright scarlet  
bud.

## THE SILVER PENNY

' SAILORMAN, I'll give to you  
My bright silver penny,  
If out to sea you'll sail me  
And my dear sister Jenny.'

' Get in, young sir, I'll sail ye  
And your dear sister Jenny,  
But pay she shall her golden locks  
Instead of your penny.'

They sail away, they sail away,  
O fierce the winds blew !  
Wild the waves, wan the foam,  
Dark the night grew !

And all the green sea-water climbed  
Steep into the boat ;  
Back to the shore again  
Sail they will not.

Drowned is the sailorman,  
Drowned is sweet Jenny,  
And drowned in the deep sea  
A bright silver penny.

## THE RAINBOW

I SAW the lovely arch  
Of Rainbow span the sky,  
The gold sun burning  
As the rain swept by.

In bright-ringed solitude  
The showery foliage shone  
One lovely moment,  
And the Bow was gone.

## THE FAIRIES DANCING

I HEARD along the early hills,  
Ere yet the lark was risen up,  
Ere yet the dawn with firelight fills  
The night-dew of the bramble-cup,—  
I heard the fairies in a ring  
Sing as they tripped a lilting round  
Soft as the moon on wavering wing.  
The starlight shook as if with sound,  
As if with echoing, and the stars  
Prankt their bright eyes with trembling  
gleams ;

While red with war the gusty Mars  
Rained upon earth his ruddy beams.  
He shone alone, adown the West,  
While I, behind a hawthorn-bush,  
Watched on the fairies flaxen-tressed  
The fires of the morning flush.



Till, as a mist, their beauty died,  
Their singing shrill and fainter grew ;  
And daylight tremulous and wide  
Flooded the moorland through and through ;  
Till Urdon's copper weathercock  
Was reared in golden flame afar,  
And dim from moonlit dreams awoke  
The towers and groves of Arroar.

## REVERIE

WHEN slim Sophia mounts her horse  
And paces down the avenue,  
It seems an inward melody  
She paces to.

Each narrow hoof is lifted high  
Beneath the dark enclustering pines,  
A silver ray within his bit  
And bridle shines.

His eye burns deep, his tail is arched,  
And streams upon the shadowy air,  
The daylight sleeks his jetty flanks,  
His mistress' hair.

Her habit flows in darkness down,  
Upon the stirrup rests her foot,  
Her brow is lifted, as if earth  
She heeded not.

'Tis silent in the avenue,

The sombre pines are mute of song,  
The blue is dark, there moves no breeze  
The boughs among.

When slim Sophia mounts her horse

And paces down the avenue,  
It seems an inward melody  
She paces to.

## THE THREE BEGGARS

'Twas autumn daybreak gold and wild,  
While past St. Ann's grey tower they shuffled,  
Three beggars spied a fairy-child  
In crimson mantle muffled.

The daybreak lighted up her face  
All pink, and sharp, and emerald-eyed ;  
She looked on them a little space,  
And shrill as hautboy cried :—

' O three tall footsore men of rags  
Which walking this gold morn I see,  
What will ye give me from your bags  
For fairy kisses three ? '

The first, that was a reddish man,  
Out of his bundle takes a crust :  
' La, by the tombstones of St. Ann,  
There's fee, if fee ye must ! '

The second, that was a chesnut man,  
Out of his bundle draws a bone :

' La, by the belfry of St. Ann,  
And all my breakfast gone ! '

The third, that was a yellow man,  
Out of his bundle picks a groat,

' La, by the Angel of St. Ann,  
And I must go without.'

That changeling, lean and icy-lipped,  
Touched crust, and bone, and groat, and lo !  
Beneath her finger taper-tipped  
The magic all ran through.

Instead of crust a peacock pie,  
Instead of bone sweet venison,  
Instead of groat a white lillie  
With seven blooms thereon.

And each fair cup was deep with wine :  
Such was the changeling's charity,  
The sweet feast was enough for nine,  
But not too much for three.

O toothsome meat in jelly froze !

O tender haunch of elfin stag !

O rich the odour that arose !

O plump with scraps each bag !

There, in the daybreak gold and wild,

Each merry-hearted beggar man

Drank deep unto the fairy child,

And blessed the good St. Ann.

## THE DWARF

' Now, Jinnie, my dear, to the dwarf be off,  
That lives in Barberry Wood,  
And fetch me some honey, but be sure you don't  
laugh,—

He hates little girls that are rude, are rude,  
He hates little girls that are rude.'

Jane tapped at the door of the house in the wood,  
And the dwarf looked over the wall,  
He eyed her so queer, 'twas as much as she  
could

To keep from laughing at all, at all,  
To keep from laughing at all.

His shoes down the passage came clod, clod, clod,  
And when he opened the door,  
He croaked so harsh, 'twas as much as she could  
To keep from laughing the more, the more,  
To keep from laughing the more.

As there, with his bushy red beard, he stood,  
    Pricked out to double its size,  
He squinted so cross, 'twas as much as she could  
    To keep the tears out of her eyes, her eyes,  
    To keep the tears out of her eyes.

He slammed the door, and went clod, clod, clod,  
    But while in the porch she bides,  
He squealed so fierce, 'twas as much as she  
    could  
    To keep from cracking her sides, her sides,  
    To keep from cracking her sides.

He threw a pumpkin over the wall,  
    And melons and apples beside,  
So thick in the air that to see 'em all fall,  
    She laughed, and laughed, till she cried,  
    cried, cried,  
    Jane laughed and laughed till she cried.

Down fell her teardrops a pit-apat-pat,  
    And red as a rose she grew ;—  
' Kah ! kah ! ' said the dwarf, ' is it crying you're  
    at ?  
It's the very worst thing you could do, do, do,  
    It's the very worst thing you could do.'



He slipped like a monkey up into a tree,  
He shook her down cherries like rain ;  
' See now,' says he, cheeping, ' a blackbird I be,  
Laugh, laugh, little Jinnie, again-gain-gain,  
Laugh, laugh, little Jinnie, again.'

Ah me ! what a strange, what a gladsome duet  
From a house in the deeps of a wood !  
Such shrill and such harsh voices never met yet  
A-laughing as loud as they could, could,  
could,  
A-laughing as loud as they could.

Come Jinnie, come dwarf, cocksparrow, and  
bee,  
There's a ring gaudy-green in the dell,  
Sing, sing, ye sweet cherubs, that flit in the  
tree ;  
La ! who can draw tears from a well, well,  
well,  
Who ever drew tears from a well !

## ALULVAN

THE sun is clear of bird and cloud,  
The grass shines windless, grey and still,  
In dusky ruin the owl dreams on,  
The cuckoo echoes on the hill ;  
    Yet soft along Alulvan's walks  
    The ghost at noonday stalks.

His eyes in shadow of his hat  
Stare on the ruins of his house ;  
His cloak, up-fasten'd with a brooch,  
Of faded velvet grey as mouse,  
    Brushes the roses as he goes :  
    Yet wavers not one rose.

The wild birds in a cloud fly up  
From their sweet feeding in the fruit ;  
The droning of the bees and flies  
Rises gradual as a lute ;  
    Is it for fear the birds are flown,  
    And shrills the insect-drone ?

Thick is the ivy o'er Alulvan,  
And crisp with summer-heat its turf ;  
Far, far across its empty pastures  
Alulvan's sands are white with surf :  
And he himself is grey as sea,  
Watching beneath an elder-tree.

All night the fretful, shrill Banshee  
Lurks in the ivy's dark festoons,  
Calling for ever, o'er garden and river,  
Through magpie changing of the moons :  
' Alulvan, O, alas ! Alulvan,  
The doom of lone Alulvan ! '

## THE PEDLAR

THERE came a Pedlar to an evening house ;  
Sweet Lettice, from her lattice looking down,  
Wondered what man he was, so curious  
His black hair dangled on his tattered gown :  
Then lifts he up his face, with glittering eyes,—  
' What will you buy, sweetheart ?—Here's  
honeycomb,  
And mottled pippins, and sweet mulberry pies,  
Comfits and peaches, snowy cherry bloom,  
To keep in water for to make night sweet :  
All that you want, sweetheart,—come, taste  
and eat ! '

Mocking, yet winsome, knelled that low voice on,  
And Lettice looked and listened, sighed and  
smiled ;

Her eyes with lustre lit, her round cheek wan,  
Her small heart beating, by such wares beguiled.

Yet in that same small heart a whisper went,—  
‘Heed not the Stranger and his sugared song !  
Only on evil are such pedlars bent :  
His sweets are death.’ Yet, still how she doth  
long

But just to taste, then shut the lattice tight,  
And hide her eyes from the delicious sight !

‘What must I pay ?’ she whispered. ‘Pay !’  
says he,

‘Pedlar I am who through this wood do roam,  
One lock of hair is gold enough for me,  
For apple, peach, comfit, or honeycomb !’  
But from her bough a drowsy squirrel cried,  
‘Trust him not, Lettice, trust, oh trust him not !’  
And many another woodland tongue beside  
Rose softly in the silence—‘Trust him not !’  
Then cried the Pedlar in a bitter voice,  
‘What, in the thicket, is this idle noise ?’

A late, harsh blackbird smote him with her  
wings,

As through the glade, dark in the dim, she flew ;  
Yet still the Pedlar his old burden sings,—

‘What, pretty sweetheart, shall I show to you ?’

Here's orange ribands, here's a string of pearls,  
Here's silk of buttercup and pansy glove,  
A pin of tortoiseshell for windy curls,  
A box of silver, scented sweet with clove :  
Come now,' he says, with dim and lifted face,  
' I pass not often such a lonely place.'

' Pluck not a hair ! ' a hidden rabbit cried,  
' With but one hair he'll steal thy heart away,  
Then only sorrow shall thy lattice hide :  
Go in ! all honest pedlars come by day.'  
There was dead silence in the drowsy wood ;  
' Here's syrup for to lull sweet maids to sleep ;  
And bells for dreams, and fairy wine and food  
All day thy heart in happiness to keep ' ;—  
And now she takes the scissors on her thumb,—  
' O, then, no more unto my lattice come ! '

Sad is the sound of weeping in the wood !  
Now only night is where the Pedlar was ;  
And bleak as frost upon a quickling bud  
His magic steals in darkness, O alas !  
Why all the summer doth sweet Lettice pine ?  
And, ere the wheat is ripe, why lies her gold  
Hid 'neath fresh new-pluckt sprigs of eglantine ?  
Why all the morning hath the cuckoo tolled,

Sad to and fro in green and secret ways,  
With solemn bells the burden of his days ?

And, in the market-place, what man is this  
Who wears a loop of gold upon his breast,  
Stuck heartwise ; and whose glassy flatteries  
Take all the townsfolk ere they go to rest  
Who come to buy and gossip ? Doth his eye  
Remember a face lovely in a wood ?  
O people ! hasten, hasten, do not buy  
His woful wares ; the bird of grief doth brood  
There where his heart should be ; and far away  
There mourns long sorrowfulness this happy  
day.

## THE OGRE

'Tis moonlight on Trebarwith Sands,  
And moonlight on their seas,  
Lone in a cove a cottage stands  
Enclustered in with trees.

Snuffing its thin faint smoke afar  
An Ogre prowls, and he  
Smells supper, for where humans are,  
Rich dainties too may be.

Sweet as a larder to a mouse,  
So to him staring down,  
Seemed the small-windowed moonlit house,  
With jasmine overgrown.

He snorted, as the billows snort  
In darkness of the night,  
Betwixt his lean locks tawny-swart,  
He glowered on the sight. .



Into the garden sweet with peas  
He put his wooden shoe,  
And bending back the apple trees  
Crept covetously through ;

Then, stooping, with a gloating eye  
Stared through the lattice small,  
And spied two children which did lie  
Asleep, against the wall.

Into their dreams no shadow fell  
Of his disastrous thumb  
Groping discreet, and gradual,  
Across the quiet room.

But scarce his nail had scraped the cot  
Wherein these children lay,  
As if his malice were forgot,  
It suddenly did stay.

Faintly upon the quiet air  
There fell a music sweet,  
That stirred with fear his matted hair  
And stayed his prowling feet.

For she who in the kitchen sat  
Darning by the fire,  
Guileless of what he would be at,  
Sang sweet as wind or wire :—

‘ Lullay, thou little tiny child,  
By-by, lullay, lullie ;  
Jesu in glory, meek and mild,  
This night remember thee !

‘ Fiend, witch, and goblin, foul and wild,  
He deems them smoke to be ;  
Lullay, thou little tiny child,  
By-by, lullay, lullie ! ’

The Ogre lifted up his eyes  
Into the moon’s pale ray,  
And gazed upon her leopard-wise,  
Cruel and clear as day ;

He snarled in gluttony and fear—  
The wind blows dismally—  
‘ Jesu in storm my lambs be near,  
By-by, lullay, lullie ! ’

And like a ravenous beast which sees  
The hunter's icy eye,  
So did this wretch in wrath confess  
Sweet Jesu's mastery.

With gaunt locks dangling, crouched he, then  
Drew backward from his prey,  
Through tangled apple-boughs again  
He wrenched and rent his way.

Out on Trebarwith Sands he broke,  
The waves yelled back his cry,  
Gannet and cormorant echo woke  
As he went striding by.

## DAME HICKORY

' DAME HICKORY, Dame Hickory,  
Here's sticks for your fire,  
Furze-twigs, and oak-twigs,  
And beech-twigs, and briar ! '  
But when old Dame Hickory came for to see,  
She found 'twas the voice of the False Faerie.

' Dame Hickory, Dame Hickory,  
Here's meat for your broth,  
Goose-flesh, and hare's flesh,  
And pig's trotters both ! '  
But when old Dame Hickory came for to see,  
She found 'twas the voice of the False Faerie.

' Dame Hickory, Dame Hickory,  
Here's a wolf at your door,  
His teeth grinning white,  
And his tongue wagging sore ! '  
' Nay ! ' said Dame Hickory, ' ye False Faerie !  
But a wolf 'twas indeed, and famished was he.

' Dame Hickory, Dame Hickory,  
Here's buds for your tomb,  
Bramble, and lavender,  
And rosemary bloom ! '

' Whsst ! ' sighs Dame Hickory, ' ye False  
Faerie,

Ye mock in my dreams, ye do, and trouble  
poor me.'

## THE PILGRIM

‘ SHALL we help you with your bundle,

You old grey man ?

Over hill and dell and meadow

Lighter than an owlet’s shadow

We will waft it through the air,

Through blue regions shrill and bare

So you may in comfort fare—

Shall we help you with your bundle,

You old grey man ? ’

The Pilgrim lifted up his eyes

And saw three Fiends in the skies,

Stooping o’er that lonely place

Evil in form and face.

‘ Nay,’ he answered, ‘ tempt me not,

O three wild Fiends !

Long the journey I am wending,

Yet the longest hath an ending ;

I must bear my bundle alone

Till the day be done.’

The Fiends stared down with leaden eye,  
Fanning the chill air duskily,  
'Twixt their hoods they stoop and cry :—

' Shall we smooth the path before you,  
Weary old man ?

Sprinkle it green with gilded showers,  
Strew it o'er with painted flowers,  
Lure bright birds to sing and flit  
In the honeyed airs of it ?

Shall we smooth the path before you,  
Sad old man ? '

' O, 'tis better silence,  
Ye three wild Fiends !

Footsore am I, faint and weary.  
Dark the way, forlorn and dreary,  
Even so, at peace I be  
Nor want for ghostly company :  
O, 'tis better silence,

Ye three wild Fiends ! '

It seemed a cloud obscured the air,  
Lightning quivered in the gloom,  
And a faint voice of thunder spake  
Far in the high hill-hollows—' Come ! '

Then, half in fury, half in dread,  
The Fiends drew closer down, and said :

‘ Nay, thou foolish fond old man,  
Hearken awhile !

Frozen, scorched, with ice and heat,  
Tarry now, sit down and eat :  
Juice of purple grape shall be  
Joy and solace unto thee.

Music of tambour, wire and wind,  
Ease shall bring to heart and mind ;  
Wonderful sweet mouths shall sigh  
Languishing and lullaby ;  
Turn then ! Curse the dream that lures thee ;  
Turn thee, ere too late it be,  
Lest thy three true Friends grow weary  
Of comforting thee ! ’

The Pilgrim crouches terrified  
At stooping hood, and glassy face,  
Gloating, evil, side by side,  
Terror and hate brood o’er the place ;  
He flings his withered hands on high  
With a bitter, breaking cry :—



' Pity have, and leave me, leave me,  
Ye three wild Fiends !  
If I lay me down in slumber  
Dark with death that sleep shall be ;  
All your fruits are fruits of evil—  
Wrath and hate and treachery.  
On mine eyes the darkness thickens,  
Blind, in dread, I stumble on,  
Cheat me not with false beguiling—  
Beseech ye, begone ! '

And even as he spake, on high  
Arrows of sunlight pierced the sky.  
Bright streamed the rain. O'er burning snow  
From hill to hill a wondrous Bow  
Of colour and fire trembled in air,  
Painting its heavenly beauty there.  
Wild flung each Fiend a batlike hood  
Against that flaming light, and stood  
Beating the windless rain and then  
Rose heavy and slow with cowering head,  
Circled in company again,  
And into darkness fled.

Marvellous sweet it was to hear  
The waters gushing loud and clear ;  
Marvellous happy it was to be  
Alone, and yet not solitary ;  
Oh, out of terror and dark to come  
In sight of Home !

## THE GAGE

‘ LADY JANE, O Lady Jane !  
Your hound hath broken bounds again,  
And chased my timorous deer, O ;  
    If him I see,  
    That hour he’ll dee ;  
My brakes shall be his bier, O.’

‘ Hoots ! lord, speak not so proud to me !  
My hound, I trow, is fleet and free,  
    He’s welcome to your deer, O ;  
    Shoot, shoot you may,  
    He’ll gang his way,  
Your threats we nothing fear, O.’

He’s fetched him in, he’s laid him low,  
Drips his lifeblood red and slow,  
    Darkens his dreary eye, O ;  
    ‘ Here is your beast,  
    And now at least  
My herds in peace shall lie, O.’

“ In peace ! ” my lord, O mark me well !  
For what my jolly hound befell

You shall sup twenty-fold, O !

For every tooth

Of his, i'sooth,

A stag in pawn I hold, O.

‘ Huntsman and horn, huntsman and horn,  
Shall scour your heaths and coverts lorn,

Braying 'em shrill and clear, O ;

But lone and still

Shall lift each hill,

Each valley wan and sere, O.

‘ Ride up you may, ride down you may,  
Lonely or trooped, by night or day,

One ghost shall haunt you ever :

Bird, beast, and game

Shall dread the same,

The fish of lake and river.’

Her cheek burns angry as the rose,

Her eye with wrath and pity flows :

He gazes fierce and round, O,—

‘ Dear Lord ! ’ he says,

‘ What loveliness

To waste upon a hound, O.

' I'd give my stags, my hills and dales,  
My stormcocks and my nightingales

To have undone this deed, O ;

For deep beneath

My heart is death

Which for her love doth bleed, O.'

He wanders up, he wanders down,

On foot, a-horse, by night and noon :

His lands are bleak and drear, O ;

Forsook his dales

Of nightingales,

Forsook his moors of deer, O.

Forsook his heart, ah me ! of mirth ;

There's nothing gladsome left on earth :

All happy dreams seem vain, O,

Save where remote

The moonbeams gloat,

And sleeps the lovely Jane, O.

But happed one eve alone he went,

Gnawing his beard in dreariment—

Lo ! from a thicket hidden,

Lovely as flower

In April hour,

Steps forth a form unbidden.

' Get ye now down, my lord, to me !  
I'm troubled so I'm like to dee,'

She cries, 'twixt joy and grief, O ;

' The hound is dead,

When all is said,

But love is past belief, O.

' Nights, nights I've lain your lands to see,  
Forlorn and still—and all for me,

All for a foolish curse, O ;

Pride may be well,

But truth to tell,

To live unlov'd is worse, O ! '

In faith, this lord, in that lone dale,

Hears now a sweeter nightingale,

And lairs a tenderer deer, O ;

His sorrow goes

Like mountain snows

In waters sweet and clear, O !

And now, what hound is this that fleet

Comes fawning to his mistress' feet,

And's bid forgive a master ?

How swiftly love

May grief remove,

How happy make disaster !

Ay, as it were a bud did break  
To loveliness for pity's sake,  
So she in beauty moving  
Rides at his hand  
Across his land,  
Beloved as well as loving.

## AS LUCY WENT A-WALKING

As Lucy went a-walking one morning cold and  
fine,

There sate three crows upon a bough, and three  
times three is nine :

Then ' O ! ' said Lucy, in the snow, ' it's very  
plain to see

A witch has been a-walking in the fields in  
front of me.'

Then stept she light and heedfully across the  
frozen snow,

And plucked a bunch of elder-twigs that near  
a pool did grow :

And, by and by, she comes to seven shadows  
in one place

Stretched black by seven poplar-trees against  
the sun's bright face.



She looks to left, she looks to right, and in the  
midst she sees

A little pool of water clear and frozen 'neath the  
trees ;

Then down beside its margent in the crusty  
snow she kneels,

And hears a magic belfry a-ringing with sweet  
bells.

Clear sang the faint far merry peal, then silence  
on the air,

And icy-still the frozen pool and poplars stand-  
ing there :

Then lo ! as Lucy turned her head and looked  
along the snow

She sees a witch—a witch she sees, come frisking  
to and fro.

Her scarlet, buckled shoes they clicked, her  
heels a-twinkling high ;

With mistletoe her steeple-hat bobbed as she  
capered by ;

But never a dint, or mark, or print, in the  
whiteness for to see,

Though danced she light, though danced she  
fast, though danced she lissomely.

It seemed 'twas diamonds in the air, or little  
flakes of frost ;

It seemed 'twas golden smoke around, or sun-  
beams lightly tost ;

It seemed an elfin music like to reeds and  
warblers rose :

' Nay ! ' Lucy said, ' it is the wind that through  
the branches flows.'

And as she peeps, and as she peeps, 'tis no  
more one, but three,

And eye of bat, and downy wing of owl within  
the tree,

And the bells of that sweet belfry a-pealing as  
before,

And now it is not three she sees, and now it is  
not four.

' O ! who are ye,' sweet Lucy cries, ' that in a  
dreadful ring,

All muffled up in brindled shawls, do caper,  
frisk, and spring ? '

' A witch and witches, one and nine,' they  
straight to her reply,

And looked upon her narrowly, with green and  
needle eye.

Then Lucy sees in clouds of gold sweet cherry  
trees upgrow,  
And bushes of red roses that bloomed above  
the snow ;  
She smells all faint the almond-boughs blow-  
ing so wild and fair,  
And doves with milky eyes ascend fluttering in  
the air.

Clear flowers she sees, like tulip buds, go float-  
ing by like birds,  
With wavering tips that warbled sweetly strange  
enchanted words ;  
And as with ropes of amethyst the twigs with  
lamps were hung,  
And clusters of green emeralds like fruit upon  
them clung.

‘ O witches nine, ye dreadful nine, O witches  
seven and three !

Whence come these wondrous things that I this  
Christmas morning see ? ’

But straight, as in a clap, when she of Christmas  
says the word,

Here is the snow, and there the sun, but never  
bloom nor bird ;

Nor warbling flame, nor gloaming-rope of  
amethyst there shows,  
Nor bunches of green emeralds, nor belfry, well,  
and rose,  
Nor cloud of gold, nor cherry-tree, nor witch in  
brindled shawl,  
But like a dream which vanishes, so vanished  
were they all.

When Lucy sees, and only sees three crows  
upon a bough,  
And earthly twigs, and bushes hidden white in  
driven snow,  
Then 'O!' said Lucy, 'three times three is  
nine—I plainly see  
Some witch has been a-walking in the fields in  
front of me.'

## THE ENGLISHMAN

I MET a sailor in the woods,  
A silver ring wore he,  
His hair hung black, his eyes shone blue,  
And thus he said to me :—

‘ What country, say, of this round earth,  
What shore of what salt sea,  
Be this, my son, I wander in,  
And looks so strange to me ? ’

Says I, ‘ O foreign sailorman,  
In England now you be,  
This is her wood, and there her sky,  
And that her roaring sea.’

He lifts his voice yet louder,  
‘ What smell be this,’ says he,  
‘ My nose on the sharp morning air  
Snuffs up so greedily ? ’

Says I, ' It is wild roses  
Do smell so winsomely,  
And winy briar too,' says I,  
' That in these thickets be.'

' And oh ! ' says he, ' what leetle bird  
Is singing in yon high tree,  
So every shrill and long-drawn note  
Like bubbles breaks in me ? '

Says I, ' It is the mavis  
That perches in the tree,  
And sings so shrill, and sings so sweet,  
When dawn comes up the sea.'

At which he fell a-musing,  
And fixed his eye on me,  
As one alone 'twixt light and dark  
A spirit thinks to see.

' England ! ' he whispers soft and harsh,  
' England ! ' repeated he,  
' And briar, and rose, and mavis,  
A-singing in yon high tree.

' Ye speak me true, my leetle son,  
So—so, it came to me,  
A-drifting landwards on a spar,  
And grey dawn on the sea.

' Ay, ay, I could not be mistook ;  
I knew them leafy trees,  
I knew that land so witcherie sweet,  
And that old noise of seas.

' Though here I've sailed a score of years,  
And heard 'em, dream or wake,  
Lap small and hollow 'gainst my cheek,  
On sand and coral break ;

' " Yet now," my leetle son, says I,  
A-drifting on the wave,  
" That land I see so safe and green  
Is England, I believe.

' " And that there wood is English wood,  
And this here cruel sea,  
The selfsame old blue ocean  
Years gone remembers me,

“ “ A-sitting with my bread and butter  
Down ahind yon chitterin' mill ;  
And this same Marinere ”—(that's me),  
“ Is that same leetle Will !—

“ “ That very same wee leetle Will  
Eating his bread and butter there,  
A-looking on the broad blue sea  
Betwixt his yaller hair ! ”

‘ And here be I, my son, throwed up  
Like corpses from the sea,  
Ships, stars, winds, tempests, pirates past,  
Yet leetle Will I be ! ’

He said no more, that sailorman,  
But in a reverie  
Stared like the figure of a ship  
With painted eyes to sea.



## THE FIDDLERS

NINE feat Fiddlers had good Queen Bess  
To play her music as she did dress.  
Behind an arras of horse and hound  
They sate there scraping delightful sound.  
Spangled, bejewelled, her skirts would she  
Draw o'er a petticoat of cramasie ;  
And soft each string like a bird would sing  
In the starry dusk of evening.  
Then slow from the deeps the crisscross bows,  
Crooning like doves, arose and arose,  
Till when, like a cage, her ladies did raise  
A stiff rich splendour o'er her ribbed stays,  
Like bumbling bees those four times nine  
Fingers in melodies loud did pine ;  
Till came her coif and her violet shoon  
And her virgin face shone out like the moon :  
Oh, then in a rapture those three times three  
Fiddlers squealed shrill on their topmost C.

## THE PHANTOM

SWIFTLY the hours of light have sped  
In solitary play,  
Now dark is fall'n, and supper's done,  
And Ann good-night must say.

Beside her Grannie's chair she stands—  
Oh, if she could but guess  
How full of fear the old house seems  
To Ann's small loneliness.

But Age is far away from Youth,  
And near another sleep,  
She nods a trembling gentle head,  
And Ann to bed must creep.

Her eyes are yet with visions bright  
Of sylph and river, flower and fay,  
Now through a narrow corridor  
She goes her lonely way.

Vast shadows on the heedless walls  
Gigantic loom, stoop low :  
Each little hasty footfall calls  
Hollowly to and fro.

Now in the dark clear glass there moves  
A taper, mocking hers,—  
A phantom face of light blue eyes,  
Reflecting phantom fears.

Around her loom the vacant rooms,  
Wind the upward stairs,  
She climbs on into a loneliness  
Only her taper shares.

Out in the dark a cold wind stirs,  
At every window sighs ;  
A waning moon peers small and chill  
From out the cloudy skies,

Casting faint tracery on the walls ;  
So stony still the house  
From cellar to attic rings the shrill  
Squeak of the hungry mouse.

Ann scarce can hear or breathe, so fast  
Her pent-up heart doth beat,  
When, faint along the corridor,  
Falleth the sound of feet :—

Sounds lighter than silk slippers make  
Upon a ballroom floor, when sweet  
Violin and 'cello wake .  
Music for twirling feet.

O ! 'neath an old unfriendly roof,  
What shapes may not conceal  
Their faces in the open day,  
At night abroad to steal ?

Even her taper seems with fear  
To languish small and blue ;  
Far in the woods the winter wind  
Runs whistling through.

A dreadful cold plucks at each hair,  
Her mouth is stretched to cry,  
But sudden, with a gush of joy,  
It narrows to a sigh.

'Tis but a phantom child which steps  
Soft through the corridor,  
Singing an old forgotten song,  
This ancient burden bore :—

' Thorn, thorn, I wis,  
And roses twain,  
A red rose and a white,  
Stoop in the blossom, bee, and kiss  
A lonely child good-night.

' Swim fish, sing bird,  
And sigh again,  
I that am lost am lone,  
Bee in the blossom never stirred  
Locks hid beneath a stone ! '—

Her eye was of the azure fire  
That hovers in wintry flame ;  
Her raiment wild and yellow as furze  
That spouteth out the same ;

And in her hand she bore no flower,  
But on her head a wreath  
Of faded flowers that did yet  
Smell sweetly after death. . . .

Gloomy with night the listening walls  
Are now that she is gone,  
Albeit this solitary child  
No longer seems alone.

Fast though her taper dwindles down,  
Though black the shadows come,  
A beauty beyond fear to dim  
Haunts now her alien home.

And in that old, old house this spirit—  
A child as lone as she—  
Pining for love not found on earth,  
Ann dreams again to see.

Seated upon her tapestry-stool,  
Her fairy-book laid by,  
She gazes into the fire, knowing  
She hath sweet company.

And as each night to bed she goes,  
Though sometimes fear may stir,  
In her small heart, soon memory comes  
And is her comforter.

## THE MILLER AND HIS SON

A TWANGLING harp for Mary,  
A silvery flute for John,  
And now we'll play the livelong day,  
' The Miller and his Son.' . . .

' The Miller went a-walking  
All in the forest high,  
He sees three doves a-flitting  
Against the dark blue sky :

' Says he, " My son, now follow  
These doves so white and free,  
That cry above the forest,  
And surely cry to thee."

" I go, my dearest Father,  
But O ! I sadly fear,  
These doves so white will lead me far,  
But never bring me near."

' He kisses the Miller,  
He cries, " Awhoop to ye ! "  
And straightway through the forest  
Follows the wood-doves three.

' There came a sound of weeping  
To the Miller in his Mill ;  
Red roses in a thicket  
Bloomed over near his wheel ;

' Three stars shone wild and brightly  
Above the forest dim :  
But never his dearest son  
Returns again to him.

' The cuckoo shall call " Cuckoo ! "  
In vain along the vale,  
The linnet, and the blackbird,  
The mournful nightingale ;

' The Miller hears and sees not,  
A-thinking of his son ;  
His toppling wheel is silent ;  
His grinding done.



“ Ye doves so white,” he weepeth,

“ Ye roses on the tree,

Ye stars that shine so brightly,

Ye shine in vain for me ! ”

‘ I bade him follow, follow,

He said, “ O Father dear,

These doves so white will lead me far

But never bring me near.” ’ . . .

A twangling harp for Mary,

A silvery flute for John,

And now we’ll play the livelong day,

‘ The Miller and his Son.’

## DOWN-ADOWN DERRY

Down-adown-derry,  
Sweet Annie Maroon,  
Gathering daisies  
In the meadows of Doone,  
Hears a shrill voice piping  
Elflike and free  
Where the waters go brawling  
In rills to the sea ;  
Singing down-adown-derry.

Down-adown-derry,  
Sweet Annie Maroon  
Through the green grasses  
Peeps softly ; and soon  
Spies under green willows  
A fairy whose song  
Like the smallest of bubbles  
Floats bobbing along ;  
Singing down-adown-derry.

Down-adown-derry  
Her cheeks were like wine,  
Her eyes in her wee face  
Like water-sparks shine,  
Her niminy fingers  
Her sleek tresses preen,  
The which in the combing  
She peeps out between ;  
Singing down-adown-derry.

Down-adown-derry,  
Shrill, shrill was her tune :—  
' Come to my water-house,  
Annie Maroon,  
Come in your dimity,  
Ribbon on head,  
To wear siller seaweed  
And coral instead ' ;  
Singing down-adown-derry.

' Down-adown-derry,  
Lean fish of the sea,  
Bring lanthorns for feasting  
The gay Fäerie ;

'Tis sand for the dancing,  
A music all sweet  
In the water-green gloaming  
For thistledown feet ;  
Singing down-adown-derry.

Down-adown-derry,  
Sweet Annie Maroon  
Looked large on the fairy  
Curled wan as the moon ;  
And all the grey ripples  
To the Mill racing by,  
With harps and with timbrels  
Did ringing reply ;  
Singing down-adown-derry.

' Down-adown-derry,'  
Sang the Fairy of Doone,  
Piercing the heart  
Of sweet Annie Maroon ;  
And lo ! when like roses  
The clouds of the sun  
Faded at dusk, gone  
Was Annie Maroon ;  
Singing down-adown-derry.

Down-adown-derry,  
The daisies are few ;  
Frost twinkles powd'ry  
In haunts of the dew ;  
And only the robin  
Perched on a thorn,  
Can comfort the heart  
Of a father forlorn ;  
Singing down-adown-derry.

Down-adown-derry,  
Snow's on the air ;  
Ice where the lily  
Bloomed waxen and fair ;  
He may call o'er the water,  
Cry—cry through the Mill,  
But Annie Maroon, alas !  
Answer ne'er will ;  
Singing down-adown-derry.

## THE SUPPER

A WOLF he pricks with eyes of fire  
Across the night's o'ercrusted snows,

Seeking his prey,

He pads his way

Where Jane benighted goes,

Where Jane benighted goes.

He curdles the bleak air with ire,

Ruffling his hoary raiment through,

And lo ! he sees

Beneath the trees

Where Jane's light footsteps go,

Where Jane's light footsteps go,

No hound peals thus in wicked joy,

He snaps his muzzle in the snows,

His five-clawed feet

Do scamper fleet

Where Jane's bright lanthorn shows,

Where Jane's bright lanthorn shows.

Now his greed's green doth gaze unseen  
On a pure face of wilding rose,

Her amber eyes

In fear's surprise

Watch largely as she goes,

Watch largely as she goes.

Salt wells his hunger in his jaws,

His lust it revels to and fro

Yet small beneath

A soft voice saith,

' Jane shall in safety go,

Jane shall in safety go.'

He lurched as if a fiery lash

Had scourged his hide, and through and through,

His furious eyes

O'erscanned the skies,

But nearer dared not go,

But nearer dared not go.

He reared like wild Bucephalus,

His fangs like spears in him uprose,

Ev'n to the town

Jane's flitting gown

He grins on as she goes,

He grins on as she goes.

In fierce lament he howls amain,  
He scampers, marvelling in his throes  
    What brought him there  
    To sup on air,  
While Jane unarmèd goes,  
    While Jane unarmèd goes.



## THE ISLE OF LONE

THREE dwarfs there were which lived in an  
isle,

And the name of that isle was Lone,  
And the names of the dwarfs were Alliolyle,  
Lallerie, Muziomone.

Their house was small and sweet of the sea,  
And pale as the Malmsey wine ;  
Their bowls were three, and their beds were  
three,  
And their nightcaps white were nine.

Their beds they were made of the holly-wood,  
Their combs of the tortoise's shell,  
Three basins of silver in corners there stood,  
And three little ewers as well.

Green rushes, green rushes lay thick on the floor,  
For light beamed a gobbet of wax ;  
There were three wooden stools for whatever  
they wore  
On their humpity-dumpity backs.

So each would lie on a drowsy pillow  
And watch the moon in the sky—  
And hear the parrot scream to the billow,  
The billow roar reply—

Parrots of sapphire and sulphur and amber,  
Amethyst, azure and green,  
While apes in the palm trees did scramble and  
clamber,  
Hairy and hungry and lean.

All night long with bubbles a-glisten  
The ocean cried under the moon,  
Till ape and parrot too sleepy to listen  
To sleep and slumber were gone.

Then from three small beds the dark hours'  
while

In a house in the Island of Lone  
Rose the snoring of Lallerie, Alliolyle,  
The snoring of Muziomone.

But soon as ever came peep of sun  
On coral and feathery tree,  
Three night-capped dwarfs to the surf would  
run  
And soon were a-bob in the sea.

At six they went fishing, at nine to snare  
Young foxes in the dells,  
At noon in the shade on sweet fruits did fare,  
And blew in their twisted shells.

Dark was the sea they gambolled in,  
And thick with silver fish,  
Dark as green glass blown clear and thin  
To be a monarch's dish.

They sate to sup in a jasmine bower,  
Lit pale with flies of fire,  
Their bowls the hue of the iris-flower,  
And lemon their attire.

Sweet wine in little cups they sipped,  
And golden honeycomb  
Into their bowls of cream they dipped,  
Whipt light and white as foam.

Now Alliolyle where the sand-flower blows  
Taught three old apes to sing—  
Taught three old apes to dance on their toes  
And caper around in a ring.

They yelled them hoarse and they croaked them  
sweet,  
They twirled them about and around,  
To the noise of their voices they danced with  
their feet,  
They stamped with their feet on the ground.

But down to the shore skipped Lallerie,  
His parrot on his thumb,  
And the twain they scritch'd in mockery,  
While the dancers go and come.

So, alas ! in the evening, rosy and still,  
Light-haired Lallerie  
Bitterly quarrelled with Alliolyle  
By the yellow-sanded sea.

The rising moon swam sweet and large  
Before their furious eyes,  
And they rolled and rolled to the coral marge  
Where the surf for ever cries.

Too late, too late, comes Muziomone :  
Clear in the clear green sea  
Alliolyle lies not alone,  
But clasped with Lallerie.

He blows on his shell plaintive notes ;  
Ape, parraquito, bee  
Flock where a shoe on the salt wave floats,—  
The shoe of Lallerie.

He fetches nightcaps, one and nine,  
Grey apes he dowers three,  
His house as fair as the Malmsey wine  
Seems sad as cypress-tree.

Three bowls he brims with sweet honeycomb  
To feast the bumble bees,  
Saying, ' O bees, be this your home,  
For grief is on the seas ! '

He sate him lone in a coral grot,  
At the flowing in of the tide ;  
When ebbd the billow, there was not,  
Save coral, aught beside.

So hairy apes in three white beds,  
And nightcaps, one and nine,  
On moonlit pillows lay three heads  
Bemused with dwarfish wine.

A tomb of coral, the dirge of bee,  
The grey apes' guttural groan  
For Alliolyle, for Lallerie,  
For thee, O Muziomone !

## THE SLEEPING BEAUTY

THE scent of bramble fills the air,  
Amid her folded sheets she lies,  
The gold of evening in her hair,  
The blue of morn shut in her eyes.

How many a changing moon hath lit  
The unchanging roses of her face !  
Her mirror ever broods on it  
In silver stillness of the days.

Oft flits the moth on filmy wings  
Into his solitary lair ;  
Shrill evensong the cricket sings  
From some still shadow in her hair.

In heat, in snow, in wind, in flood,  
She sleeps in lovely loneliness,  
Half folded like an April bud  
On winter-haunted trees.

## THE HORN

HARK ! is that a horn I hear,  
In cloudland winding sweet—  
And bell-like clash of bridle-rein,  
And silver-shod light feet ?

Is it the elfin laughter  
Of fairies riding faint and high,  
'Neath the branches of the moon,  
Straying through the starry sky ?

Is it in the globèd dew  
Such sweet melodies may fall ?  
Wood and valley—all are still,  
Hushed the shepherd's call.



## CAPTAIN LEAN

Out of the East a hurricane  
Swept down on Captain Lean—  
That mariner and gentleman  
Will ne'er again be seen.

He sailed his ship against the foes  
Of his own country dear,  
But now in the trough of the billows  
An aimless course doth steer.

Powder was violets to his nostrils,  
Sweet the din of the fighting-line,  
Now he is flotsam on the seas,  
And his bones are bleached with brine.

The stars move up along the sky,  
The moon she shines so bright,  
And in that solitude the foam  
Sparkles unearthly white.

This is the tomb of Captain Lean,  
Would a straiter please his soul ?  
I trow he sleeps in peace,  
Howsoever the billows roll !

## THE PORTRAIT OF A WARRIOR

His brow is seamed with line and scar ;  
His cheek is red and dark as wine ;  
The fires as of a Northern star  
Beneath his cap of sable shine.

His right hand, bared of leathern glove,  
Hangs open like an iron gin,  
You stoop to see his pulses move,  
To hear the blood sweep out and in.

He looks some king, so solitary  
In earnest thought he seems to stand,  
As if across a lonely sea  
He gazed impatient of the land.

Out of the noisy centuries  
The foolish and the fearful fade ;  
Yet burn unquenched these warrior eyes,  
Time hath not dimmed nor death dismayed.

## HAUNTED

FROM out the wood I watched them shine,—  
The windows of the haunted house,  
Now ruddy as enchanted wine,  
Now dark as flittermouse.

There went a thin voice piping airs  
Along the grey and crooked walks,—  
A garden of thistledown and tares,  
Bright leaves, and giant stalks.

The twilight rain shone at its gates,  
Where long-leaved grass in shadow grew ;  
And black in silence to her mates  
A voiceless raven flew.

Lichen and moss the lone stones greened,  
Green paths led lightly to its door,  
Keen from her lair the spider leaned,  
And dusk to darkness wore.

Amidst the sedge a whisper ran,  
The West shut down a heavy eye,  
And like last tapers, few and wan,  
The watch-stars kindled in the sky.

## THE RAVEN'S TOMB

' BUILD me my tomb,' the Raven said,  
' Within the dark yew-tree,  
So in the Autumn yewberries  
Sad lamps may burn for me.  
Summon the haunted beetle,  
From twilight bud and bloom,  
To drone a gloomy dirge for me  
At dusk above my tomb.  
Beseech ye too the glowworm  
To rear her cloudy flame,  
Where the small, flickering bats resort,  
Whistling in tears my name.  
Let the round dew a whisper make,  
Welling on twig and thorn ;  
And only the grey cock at night  
Call through his silver horn.  
And you, dear sisters, don your black  
For ever and a day,  
To show how true a raven  
In his tomb is laid away.'

## THE CHRISTENING

THE bells chime clear,  
Soon will the sun behind the hills sink down ;  
Come, little Ann, your baby brother dear  
Lies in his christening-gown.

His godparents  
Are all across the fields stepped on before,  
And wait beneath the crumbling monuments,  
This side the old church door.

Your mammie dear  
Leans frail and lovely on your daddie's arm ;  
Watching her chick, 'twixt happiness and fear,  
Lest he should come to harm.

All to be blest  
Full soon in the clear heavenly water, he  
Sleeps on unwitting of't, his little breast  
Heaving so tenderly.

I carried you,  
My little Ann, long since on this same quest,  
And from the painted windows a pale hue  
Lit golden on your breast ;

And then you woke,  
Chill as the holy water trickled down,  
And, weeping, cast the window a strange look,  
Half smile, half infant frown.

I scarce could hear  
The larks a-singing in the green meadows,  
'Twas summertide, and, budding far and near,  
The hedges thick with rose.

And now you're grown  
A little girl, and this same helpless mite  
Is come like such another bud half-blown,  
Out of the wintry night.

Time flies, time flies !  
And yet, bless me ! 'tis little changed am I ;  
May Jesu keep from tears those infant eyes,  
Be love their lullaby !



## THE FUNERAL

THEY dressed us up in black,  
Susan and Tom and me ;  
And, walking through the fields  
All beautiful to see,  
With branches high in the air  
And daisy and buttercup,  
We heard the lark in the clouds,—  
In black dressed up. .

They took us to the graves,  
Susan and Tom and me,  
Where the long grasses grow  
And the funeral tree :  
We stood and watched ; and the wind  
Came softly out of the sky  
And blew in Susan's hair,  
As I stood close by.

Back through the fields we came,  
Tom and Susan and me,  
And we sat in the nursery together,  
And had our tea.  
And, looking out of the window,  
I heard the thrushes sing ;  
But Tom fell asleep in his chair,  
He was so tired, poor thing.

## THE MOTHER BIRD

THROUGH the green twilight of a hedge  
I peered, with cheek on the cool leaves pressed,  
And spied a bird upon a nest :  
Two eyes she had beseeching me  
Meekly and brave, and her brown breast  
Throbb'd hot and quick above her heart ;  
And then she oped her dagger bill,—  
'Twas not a chirp, as sparrows pip  
At break of day ; 'twas not a trill,  
As falters through the quiet even ;  
But one sharp solitary note,  
One desperate, fierce, and vivid cry  
Of valiant tears, and hopeless joy,  
One passionate note of victory :  
Off, like a fool afraid, I sneaked,  
Smiling the smile the fool smiles best,  
At the mother bird in the secret hedge  
Patient upon her lonely nest.

## THE CHILD IN THE STORY GOES TO BED

I PRYTHEE, Nurse, come smooth my hair,  
And prythee, Nurse, unloose my shoe,  
And trimly turn my silken sheet  
Upon my quilt of gentle blue.

My pillow sweet of lavender  
Smooth with an amiable hand,  
And may the dark pass peacefully by  
As in the hour-glass droops the sand.

Prepare my cornered manchets sweet,  
And in my little crystal cup  
Pour out the blithe and flowering mead  
That forthwith I may sup.

Withdraw my curtains from the night,  
And let the crispèd crescent shine  
Upon my eyelids while I sleep,  
And soothe me with her beams benign.

Dark looks the forest far-away ;

O, listen ! through its empty dales  
Rings from the solemn echoing boughs  
The music of its nightingales.

Now quench my silver lamp, prythee,  
And bid the harpers harp that tune  
Fairies which haunt the meadowlands  
Sing clearly to the stars of June.

And bid them play, though I in dreams  
No longer heed their pining strains,  
For I would not to silence wake  
When slumber o'er my senses wanes.

You Angels bright who me defend,  
Enshadow me with curvèd wing,  
And keep me in the darksome night  
Till dawn another day do bring.

## THE CHILD IN THE STORY AWAKES

THE light of dawn rose on my dreams,  
And from afar I seemed to hear  
In sleep the mellow blackbird call  
Hollow and sweet and clear.

I prythee, Nurse, my casement open,  
Wildly the garden peals with singing,  
And hooting through the dewy pines  
The goblins of the dark are winging.

O listen the droning of the bees,  
That in the roses take delight !  
And see a cloud stays in the blue  
Like an angel still and bright.

The gentle sky is spread like silk,  
And, Nurse, the moon doth languish there,  
As if it were a perfect jewel  
In the morning's soft-spun hair.

The greyness of the distant hills  
Is silvered in the lucid East,  
See, now the sheeny-plumèd cock  
Wags haughtily his crest.

‘ O come you out, O come you out,  
Lily, and lavender, and lime ;  
The kingcup swings his golden bell,  
And plumpy cherries drum the time.

O come you out, O come you out !  
Roses, and dew, and mignonette.  
The sun is in the steep blue sky,  
Sweetly the morning star is set.’

## THE LAMPLIGHTER

WHEN the light of day declineth,  
And a swift angel through the sky  
Kindleth God's tapers clear,  
With ashen staff the lamplighter  
Passeth along the darkling streets  
To light our earthly lamps ;

Lest, prowling in the darkness,  
The thief should haunt with quiet tread,  
Or men on evil errands set ;  
Or wayfarers be benighted ;  
Or neighbours bent from house to house  
Should need a guiding torch.

He is like a needlewoman  
Who deftly on a sable hem  
Stitches in gleaming jewels ;  
Or, haply, he is like a hero,  
Whose bright deeds on the long journey  
Are beacons on our way.



## THE LAMPLIGHTER

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And when in the East cometh morning,  
And the broad splendour of the sun,  
Then, with the tune of little birds  
Ringing on high, the lamplighter  
Passeth by each quiet house,  
And putteth out the lamps.

## I MET AT EVE

I MET at eve the Prince of Sleep,  
His was a still and lovely face,  
He wandered through a valley steep,  
Lovely in a lonely place.

His garb was grey of lavender,  
About his brows a poppy-wreath  
Burned like dim coals, and everywhere  
The air was sweeter for his breath.

His twilight feet no sandals wore,  
His eyes shone faint in their own flame,  
Fair moths that gloomed his steps before  
Seemed letters of his lovely name.

His house is in the mountain ways,  
A phantom house of misty walls,  
Whose golden flocks at evening graze,  
And witch the moon with muffled calls.

Upwelling from his shadowy springs  
Sweet waters shake a trembling sound,  
There flit the hoot-owl's silent wings,  
There hath his web the silkworm wound.

Dark in his pools clear visions lurk,  
And rosy, as with morning buds,  
Along his dales of broom and birk  
Dreams haunt his solitary woods.

I met at eve the Prince of Sleep,  
His was a still and lovely face,  
He wandered through a valley steep,  
Lovely in a lonely place.

## LULLABY

SLEEP, baby, sleep !

The little mouse cheeps plaintively,  
The nightingale in the chesnut-tree—  
They sing together, bird and mouse,  
In starlight, in darkness, lonely, sweet,  
The wild notes and the faint notes meet—  
Sleep, baby, sleep !

Sleep, baby, sleep !

Amid the lilies floats the moth,  
The mole along his galleries goeth  
In the dark earth ; the summer moon  
Looks like a shepherd through the pane  
Seeking his feeble lamb again—  
Sleep, baby, sleep !

Sleep, baby, sleep !

Time comes to keep night-watch with thee,

Nodding with roses ; and the sea

Saith ' Peace ! Peace ! ' amid his foam.

' O be still ! '

The wind cries up the whispering hill—

Sleep, baby, sleep !

## ENVOY

CHILD, do you love the flower  
Ashine with colour and dew  
Lighting its transient hour ?  
So I love you.

The lambs in the mead are at play,  
'Neath a hurdle the shepherd's asleep,  
From height to height of the day  
The sunbeams sweep.

Evening will come. And alone  
The dreamer the dark will beguile ;  
All the world will be gone  
For a dream's brief while.

Then I shall be old ; and away :  
And you, with sad joy in your eyes,  
Will brood over children at play  
With as loveful surmise.















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